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## **AN ANALYSIS OF THE MILITARY ROLE IN THE WAR ON DRUGS**

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## AN ANALYSIS OF THE MILITARY ROLE IN THE WAR ON DRUGS

### I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of my paper is to present a critical analysis of the military role in the drug "war" in America. To do this, I believe it is necessary to determine whether the present drug crisis is truly a "war"; and if it is, how should the military's role be defined, and what should it be?

Karl von Clausewitz' theories on absolute war and limited war will serve as a basis to define "war." Next, assuming that Clausewitz' theories on war have some relevancy to the drug crisis, the military's role in combatting the "war" will be examined. To do this, Clausewitz' theory on the political character of war, and the paradoxical trinity of war will be used to define/suggest drug policy formulation and the military's role in the drug war.

### II. DEFINING THE NATURE OF THE DRUG CRISIS IN AMERICA: IS IT WAR?

#### (A) ABSOLUTE WAR

##### "BUSH VOWS MILITARY USE IN WAR ON DRUGS"

President Bush...pledged to use the nation's military forces in his war on drugs, telling a Veterans of Foreign Wars audience that illegal narcotics are 'a threat no less real than the adversaries you have battled' in the nation's declared wars."

Los Angeles Times, March 7, 1989

...We will help any government that wants our help. When requested, we will for the first time make available the appropriate resources of America's armed forces...Victory. Victory over drugs is our cause, a just cause, and with your help, we are going to win."

Speech: National Drug Control Strategy  
by George Bush, President  
Delivered to the American people - Sept. 5, 1989

What does President Bush mean by a "war on drugs"? How does he define this "war"?

Clausewitz states that the ideal form of war is absolute war. "War is an act of force, and there are no logical limits to the application of that force." It is a "clash  
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of forces freely operating...obedient to no law but their own." Expanding on this definition, Clausewitz theorizes that absolute war is the only real war, and it eventually ends in total destruction of one side by the other. Is this what George Bush means by a "war on drugs"? If, as Clausewitz says, war is an absolute affair, against whom is the United States prepared to wage "escalating violence"--the Medellin and Cali drug cartels? The coca leaf farmers in the hills of Colombia, Peru and Bolivia? And, since the supply side of the drug trade shockingly mirrors the insatiable demand for drugs by the American consumer (Americans consume approximately \$150 billion worth of drugs annually), will this be a two-theater war of escalating proportions--one fought in the jungles of South America, the other on the streets of New York City, Washington, DC, Los Angeles, Kennebunkport? I doubt that the President's declaration of a "war on drugs" was meant to match Clausewitz' absolute model. Therefore, if the drug crisis does not fit Clausewitz' description of war as "total", then the drug crisis is not a war, and as a consequence, the pledge of military involvement has no relevancy.

But, astute theoretician that he is, Clausewitz observes that there are other intervening factors that make his pristine theory of absolute war inchoate. These involve the "specific characteristics of the states in conflict, and the general characteristics of the times...". In other words, the thesis of total war is only an ideal, and realism modifies the concept of the "absoluteness" of war. This leads to a definition of limited war.

#### (B) LIMITED WAR

"If war consisted of one decisive act, no omissions could ever be rectified... [However], as soon as preparations for war begin, the world of reality takes over from the world of abstract thought; material calculations take the place of hypothetical extremes and...the interaction of the two sides tends to fall short of maximum effort. Their full resources will, therefore, not be mobilized immediately..."

Clausewitz

Essentially, Clausewitz modifies his definition of war, observing that it is never an isolated act--it is not a short, uninterrupted blow of ultimate proportions. The dual

nature of war means that violence spans the continuum from wars of annihilation to armed demonstrations. If policy designs the face of war, then, as a national policy option, limited wars are a distinct possibility. Applying Clausewitz' expanded views on war, the present drug crisis in America--a crisis that threatens the national security of the nation, can justifiably be termed a war. Then, if this is "war," albeit limited, what role does the military play in the "war"? Who determines the military's role? What is the extent of its role? Clausewitz' theories on political leadership and the understanding of the paradoxical trinity form the basis for answers to these questions.

### **III. HOW POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND THE PARADOXICAL TRINITY DETERMINE THE MILITARY'S ROLE IN THE DRUG WAR**

#### **(a) POLITICAL LEADERSHIP DETERMINES MILITARY POLICY**

"War is a continuation of policy, by other means... The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose..."

Clausewitz

In the war on drugs, Clausewitz would argue that the political leadership conducts and controls military policy. As he sees it, the military must be content, if asked, with "partial mobilization of resources" and with "limited achievements." Does this accurately reflect current military policy in the drug war as defined by the American leadership? Is it clear? Is it workable? What are the objectives? Are they really attainable?

#### **"CHENEY ORDERS PENTAGON CHIEFS TO PLAN ROLE IN BUSH DRUG BATTLE"**

"Defense Secretary Dick Cheney told military leaders...to draw up plans for using their planes, ships, radar and troops to help stem the flow of drugs into the United States..."

"I believe that our military forces have the capability to make a substantial contribution toward drug interdiction, and I am asking them to make the necessary preparations to carry out that responsibility..."

"...Cheney said the Defense Department will emphasize stopping drugs from entering the country, but will also help fight drug abuse and aid nations in attacking drugs at their source..."

"Cheney insisted that in no case would the Pentagon be drawn into a law enforcement role."

"Nor, he said, will U.S. forces overseas be sent into combat. " "The Secretary conceded, however, that using U.S. military personnel to train other nations' forces, as is being done in Colombia, can put U.S. military personnel at risk."

Suzanne M. Schafer, AP Military Writer

Let's examine Secretary Cheney's statement in terms of Clausewitz' theory on the role of political leadership. Clausewitz warns that leadership should take care not to demand the impossible from the military and should collaborate with senior commanders in developing overall policies. When Secretary Cheney states that the military will not only be involved with "...stopping drugs from entering the country...", but will also ..."help fight drug abuse...". What exactly does this mean? Will the military be deployed in schools and recreation centers to give "Just Say No" lectures? When the Secretary and the President promise that no "...U.S. forces overseas [will be] sent into combat...", how do they intend to avoid this? And correspondingly, if this war is a two-theater affair--an international drug war, and a domestic drug war---what limitations will be placed on the military's domestic role? Are Americans really ready to give up civil liberties to the military as a price for "victory" ? Is a Vietnamization of the drug war at home and abroad an inevitability? It is obvious that certain questions in the conduct of this "limited" operation have not been adequately and realistically addressed.

Given Clausewitz' proposition that political leadership must answer these questions, what process is available to obtain acceptable answers? Clausewitz observes that an understanding and application of the "paradoxical trinity" paves the way to development of national policies. My concluding remarks focus on his trinity and its relevance in developing a military policy for the war on drugs.

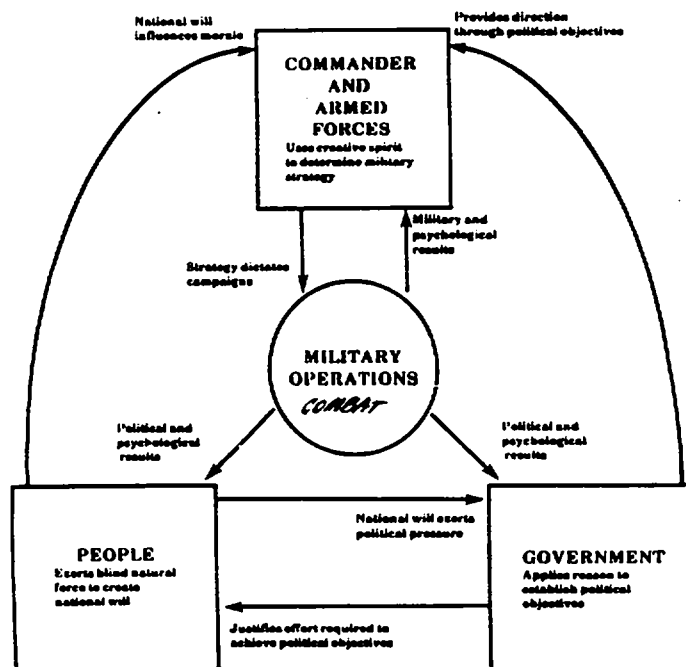
(b) UNDERSTANDING THE PARADOXICAL TRINITY AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN DEVELOPING A MILITARY POLICY FOR THE DRUG WAR

"As a total phenomenon, its dominant tendencies always make war a paradoxical (remarkable) trinity--composed of primordial violence, hatred and enmity...; of the play of chance and probability...; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy..."

Clausewitz

In developing a military policy and determining its application, an understanding and review of Clausewitz' paradoxical trinity is a useful tool. His description of the three dynamic elements of the trinity (violence; chance and probability; political purpose and effort) and their corresponding models in society (People, Commander, Government) have been graphically depicted by Colonel Art Grant. I use Grant's model to give examples of the dynamics of the paradoxical trinity and how it can relate to drug policy development. NOTE: These are only selective examples to illustrate an application of the model):

### THE PARADOXICAL TRINITY AND ITS USE IN POLICY-MAKING



- Col. A. Grant, NWC, 1989.

ISSUES RAISED BY ELEMENTS OF THE TRINITY	TRINITY ELEMENT ASSOCIATED WITH ISSUE	DEGREE OF INFLUENCE OF TRINITY ELEMENT	GUIDANCE FOR POLICY FORMULATION-TRINITY BALANCE	AUDIENCE TO TARGET IN POLICY FORMULATION
<p><b>ISSUE:</b> Heavy use of military and enforcement agents instead of drug treatment policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defining the needed counter-effort as a "war" and to slant it so heavily toward combat, arrests, and jailing could <u>produce an ugly backlash.</u> Tom Wicker, NY Times, 10/3/89</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People expressing will, passion.</li> <li>Government. Possibly Over-reacting to People.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People's passion stimulates violence-oriented policies. Exert heavy influence on Government.</li> <li>Government develops extreme policies, tends to heavily influence People and Military.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More balance needed to counter People's above-average degree of passion for violent measures.</li> <li>More balance by moderate elements of People and Government to off-set skewed passions, and skewed political objectives.</li> </ul>	<p>Govt: Target People advise moderation; attempt to moderate public (people's reaction). Attempt to develop moderating policy.</p> <p>Military: Target internal military elements to maintain moderate posture. Target Government leadership elements to promote modernization in policies.</p>



ISSUES RAISED BY ELEMENTS OF THE TRINITY	TRINITY ELEMENT ASSOCIATED WITH ISSUE	DEGREE OF INFLUENCE OF TRINITY ELEMENT	GUIDANCE FOR POLICY FORMULATION-TRINITY BALANCE	AUDIENCE TO TARGET IN POLICY FORMULATION
<p><b>ISSUE: Fighting Drugs Domestically; Will It Become a Dedicatedly Racial Conflict?</b></p> <p>"...A key political adviser to the President...says that as the use of drugs increasingly becomes a taboo, Bush will be able to point to some real results...but the progress will slow as the problem gets down to the 'hard core'..."</p> <p>"At that point, something will happen that people don't like to talk about: the drug issue will increasingly be seen through a racial overlay. Actually, it is pretty much seen through a racial prism now." ...They aren't shown pictures of middle-class professors, or wealthy businessmen, getting high on drugs. In people's minds, the pollsters find the subject of drugs is paired with the subject of crime...and the crime issue has had a racial overlay for a long time..."</p> <p>Elizabeth Drew, New Yorker Magazine October 2, 1989</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government</li> <li>• People: White Community Black Community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavy influence can be exerted by the Government to keep a balance on any racial skew that may develop in combatting the drug war.</li> <li>• Whites tend to heavily influence all components of the trinity</li> <li>• African-Americans tend to exert less influence on trinity, and tend to be less responsive to participating in influencing Government decisionmaking.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government must judiciously weigh/react to influence of various People factions.</li> <li>• Counter-balanced factions of white community must participate in policy formulation.</li> <li>• African-Americans must take more proactive posture in policy formulation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gov't: Target all factions of People</li> <li>• People: Balanced elements of People should target Gov't..</li> <li>• Military: Advise Gov't &amp; People of the development of most effective policy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>ISSUE: Alternative Suggestions For Use of Military Forces In Drug Interdiction</b></p> <p>"...There is another option...turn loose the Special Operations Command (on drug traffickers). Drug interdiction could provide realistic training for the low-intensity conflict visualized by this command.</p> <p>Gen. T.R. Milton, UDSAF (Ret.) Air Force Magazine, 9/88.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gov't/Military</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Military (Commander) can exert heavy influence/advice on selected government elements in terms of deciding tactics for drug interdiction in South America.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Military should review tactical options and serve as a realistic advisor to Government leadership on options available. Military should seek to positively influence political/ government leadership suggest best options available, keeping balance of trinity in focus.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Military: Address Gov't leaders, offer advice on military option.</li> <li>• Gov't: Weigh Military's advice, balance it with domestic and international considerations. Formulate policy.</li> </ul>

ISSUES RAISED BY ELEMENTS OF THE TRINITY	TRINITY ELEMENT ASSOCIATED WITH ISSUE	DEGREE OF INFLUENCE OF TRINITY ELEMENT	GUIDANCE FOR POLICY FORMULATION-TRINITY BALANCE	AUDIENCE TO TARGET IN POLICY FORMULATION
<p><b>ISSUE: Abrogation of Civil Liberties; Threats to Constitutional Freedoms in Combatting Drug War.</b>  <b>"A Washington Post/NBC News poll published after Mr. Bush's speech found:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 62% of respondents willing to give up 'a few of the freedoms we have in this country' to support a 'war' on drugs.</li> </ul> <p>52% said they would be willing to have homes searched</p> <p>67% would allow cars to be stopped by police without court orders, even if people 'like themselves' were searched by mistake.</p> <p>82% favored allowing military to combat illegal drugs <u>within</u> the U.S.</p> <p>55% supported mandatory drug testing for <u>all</u> Americans;</p> <p>67% back such testing for high school students;</p> <p>83% favored reporting drug users, including relatives, to the police.</p> <p>Tom Wicker, NY Times 10/3/89</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People.</li> </ul>	<p>People's visceral reaction sends strong signals to Government leadership. People's opinion greatly influences Government/ Military policy formulation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More balance is necessary;</li> <li>• Moderation of extreme attitudes needed;</li> <li>• Horror of loss of civil liberties needs to be communicated.</li> </ul>	<p>Gov't: Target opinion leaders among People</p> <p>Military: Work with Government, coordinate ways to re-establish balance;</p> <p>People: Gov't works to include all elements of People. Determine if opinion shift is possible.</p>

As the preceding model indicates, applying the dynamic elements of the paradoxical trinity greatly assists policy development. Government/political remains the focal point in keeping this a rational drug policy. It is the military, once charged, that will help carry out the plans.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

By examining Clausewitz' concepts of war, I have concluded that the present drug crisis in America can appropriately be termed "a limited war." However, many questions remain unanswered on the military's role in the drug war. For example, it is obvious that the war on drugs is a two-theater war. While the military can be effectively used internationally against drug traffickers, the domestic war must be fought by law enforcement agents--and most significantly, by the People, who must be willing to institute effective, societal changes.

Extreme passions are presently driving the People's policy input on the conduct of the drug war. Passions must be moderated if an effective, workable military policy is to be formulated. In this regard, the political leadership (Government/Congress) could greatly benefit by reviewing Clausewitz since the drug war is probably the most lethal, internally devastating one the American people have ever faced.